Cherokee Triangle

Preservation District

A Brief History

From Farm to Subdivision

Efforts by James Henning and Joshua Speed, local real estate developers, provided the initial impetus to establish Cherokee Triangle as a residential community. During the late 1800s, Henning and Speed bought and subdivided 134 acres of hilly countryside to the east of Louisville, calling it the Henning and Speed Highland Addition.

Disadvantage of Distance

Sales of lots proved slow at first. Most could not afford the expense of maintaining horse-drawn carriages or were not willing to endure the discomfort of commuting by mule-driven streetcar. A number of wealthy residents built country residences there, complete with carriage houses, stables, and servants' quarters. One of the first residents was Henning's daughter, who received a spacious two-story brick home, still standing on the corner of Cherokee and Grinstead Drive, as a wedding present from her father.

Electric Trolleys Edge Out the Competition

By the 1890s, development of the Highland Addition, known as the Highlands, increased significantly. Louisville's emergence as a major manufacturing center created a rising professional and managerial class that sought high-quality, modern housing. Cherokee Triangle offered opportunities to build homes with up-to-date electricity and plumbing on its many open lots. Newspapers advertised the neighborhood as a quiet place in the countryside far from the noisy city. Arrival of electric trolleys in 1889 enabled quick and comfortable access to downtown. Old Louisville, on the other hand, had few remaining open lots, and members of the rising middle class were rarely willing to retrofit older homes. Consequently, older neighborhoods like Old Louisville slowly began losing population to newer areas like the Cherokee Triangle.

The Park and Community Identity

In 1892, the newly opened Cherokee Park clinched the success of the suburb as one of Louisville's most

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fashionable places to live. Designed by Frederick Law Olmsted, a nationally renowned landscape architect, Cherokee Park was an instant success. Its natural scenery provided an antidote for the bustle of modern life, and buyers scrambled to acquire land adjacent to the park. The park was an essential element of the community's identity, and soon residents began calling the area Cherokee Triangle for the semi-triangular boundary the park provided.

Impact of Automobiles

Development maintained a rapid pace through the turn of the century, and businesses sprang up along Bardstown Road, the streetcar route. Community leaders saw to the construction of a local library, schools, and churches. By the beginning of World War I, houses lined the streets, and streetcars and horse-drawn carriages began to share the road with the new automobile. In the post-war years, the number of cars on the road increased dramatically. Consequently, dirt roads were paved and the streetcar service came to an end.

Falling Out of Favor

Fashionable through the early 1940s, Cherokee Triangle's popularity began to dwindle after World War II. Newer suburbs surrounded it, undermining its rural character and enveloping it within the urban landscape. Developers offering new houses designed with the latest technology drew residents away from the Triangle, perpetuating a cycle that has been devastating to historic neighborhoods.

Cooperation and Revitalization

Deterioration set in by the 1950s and 1960s, and the overall quality of the area began to decline. In response, residents organized the Cherokee Triangle Association and began efforts to revitalize their community. Through the work of the Association and city officials, the Historic Landmarks and Preservation Districts Commission designated Cherokee Triangle a local preservation district in 1975.

National Recognition

Soon after, the National Register of Historic Places designated the Cherokee Triangle a National Register district. Following this designation, people began to reinvest in the area, renovating many neglected historic houses. Today, Cherokee Park has streets lined with well-preserved homes occupied by families who value the community's quality architecture and historic character.

Did You Know?

- A former buffalo trace, settlers trail, and streetcar route, Bardstown Road is one of the oldest roads in the city. Streetcar tracks still lie under the asphalt.
- Cherokee Road is the oldest street within the boundary of the preservation district.
- Early Triangle residents sought the services of talented local architects to design their homes, churches, and businesses in the revival styles popular during the late nineteenth century.
- During the 1960s, city residents transformed elegantly- designed carriage houses into homes. A beautiful example of a renovated Victorian-era carriage house is 2101 Cherokee Parkway.
- The statue of General John B. Castleman, erected 1913, stands as a neighborhood landmark. Castleman was President of the Board of the Parks Commission and helped create the city's park system. His statue faces Cherokee Park.
- Hogan's Fountain in Cherokee Park once provided drinking water for horses pulling carriages up the park's many steep hills.

"Reading" Your Building— A Crash Course

Property owners planning to make exterior changes to a historic building should start by identifying the features and materials that give their structure its unique character, as well as its historic and non-historic elements. By taking the time to recognize and understand significant features, you will be much more likely to plan a project that is compatible with the original style of the building.

If, after looking over these guidelines, you would still like more information, the staff will be happy to arrange a pre-application meeting. Staff members can provide additional advice on the character of your building and how it relates to your upcoming project.

Learning to read a building and identify its significant elements is not complicated. Begin by thinking about and answering the questions below.

Step One

Identify the overall visual aspects of a building. Do not focus on the details, but on the setting and architectural context. Begin by working through the checklist below.

SHAPE

What is there about the form or shape of the building that gives the building its identity? Is it short and squat, or tall and narrow?

ROOF AND ROOF FEATURES

How does the roof shape or pitch contribute to the building's character? Are there unique features like weathervanes, cresting, or cupolas?

OPENINGS

What rhythm or pattern does the arrangement of window or door openings create? Are there unusually-shaped window openings or distinctive entryways?

PROJECTIONS

Are there parts of the building that are character-defining because they project from the walls of the building like porches, cornices, bay windows, or balconies? Are there turrets, or widely overhanging eaves, projecting pediments, or chimneys?

TRIM AND SECONDARY FEATURES

How does window and door trim contribute to the character of the building? Be sure to consider the

decoration, color, or patterning of the trim. What about secondary features like shutters, decorative gables, and railings?

MATERIALS

From a distance, what contribution do the color, texture, and combination of exterior materials make to the overall character of the building?

SETTING

What aspects of the setting are important in establishing the visual character of the site? Think about the building's setback, alignment with adjacent buildings, plantings, fencing, terracing, and outbuildings, and its relationship to the street and alley.

Step Two

Identify the character of the building at close range. Assess the color and texture of the building materials as they convey the craftsmanship and age that gives the building its unique appearance. Begin by working through the checklist below.

MATERIALS AT CLOSE INSPECTION

Are there one or more materials that have an inherent texture that contribute to the close-range character, such as stucco, exposed aggregate concrete, or brick textured with vertical grooves?

CRAFT DETAILS

Is there high-quality brickwork with narrow mortar joints, or hand-tooled or patterned stonework? Are there hand-split or hand-dressed clapboards or machine-smoothed beveled siding? Craft details, whether handmade or machine-made, contribute to the character of a building because they are manifestations of the time in which the work was done and of the tools and processes that were used.

Courtesy of the University of Louisville Photographic Archives

Cherokee Triangle—Picturesque Suburb

Benefits of High Ground
During the mid-nineteenth century, expansive farms spread across the land now comprising Cherokee Triangle. By the mid-1880s, after a series of floods devastated the lowlands, people began to see the development potential of the district's high ground.

Countryside with Convenience
Developers promoted the area as a natural retreat from the din of the workaday world, near Cave Hill Cemetery and surrounded by the newly created Cherokee Park. Although the installation of electric trolley lines greatly eased the commute of the neighborhood's up-and-coming professionals, residents cultivated picturesque rusticity as an integral part of the district's character.

Building Use
The Cherokee Triangle Preservation District is residential in character, although the hectic commercial corridor of Bardstown Road runs parallel to one of its boundaries. Predominately comprised of single-family homes, the district also contains a significant number of apartments housed in large- and small-scale apartment buildings and converted residences.

Circulation Patterns
The irregular and curvilinear quality of the streets reflects the neighborhood's historic subdivision patterns and contributes to the district's picturesque character. Alleys run behind many blocks, creating an important secondary circulation network. Many houses have garages that are accessed via these alleys, and although some front-yard driveways do exist, they are the exception rather than the norm.

Site Character
Lawns and side yards provide buffers between houses, but they vary considerably in size and extent. Some houses are nestled close together, while others are set amidst expanses of green. Ornamental plantings, including many mature canopy trees, convey a sense of pastoral character that differentiates Cherokee Triangle from its urban counterparts. The neighborhood's rolling topography and its attendant stone retaining walls and continuous flights of exterior steps seen on many blocks are other notable, distinguishing features.

Architectural Experimentation
Architects and builders experimented with myriad architectural styles during the neighborhood's major period of development, and the character of the buildings varies block by block. Consequently, a wide range of styles and periods of development are represented. Common building styles include Queen Anne, Colonial Revival, Craftsman, and Tudor; however, houses within each block often share similar traits of scale, massing, and setback. Tidy, frame, Queen Anne developer-built houses lie a mere stone's throw from opulent Renaissance Revival mansions. In general, buildings within the district appear less monumental and flamboyant than those

typically seen in Old Louisville. Even the larger mansions are somewhat restrained in overall ornamentation.

Building Materials

A walk down any street reveals a range of such building materials as conservative frame construction, brick ornamented with carved limestone, stucco, and Tudor "half-timbering." Front porches are common and contribute to the human scale and neighborliness of the district. Delicate wooden trim ornaments some while others exhibit solid masonry piers. The more ornate facades often incorporate carved stone and terra cotta, while simpler buildings use decorative windows, doors, and trim to convey their architectural style.

Directional Emphasis

Early Victorian-era houses tend toward verticality with upward-reaching towers and turrets, while later Prairie-influenced buildings spread out horizontally. Most structures are between one-and-one-half and two-and-one-half stories in height and sit on a slightly-raised stone or concrete foundation with a narrow concrete walk and concrete or limestone steps leading up to the entry. The few large-scale apartment buildings, however, are notable exceptions.

Although a wave of movement out of the district took place during the post-war suburban exodus, civic awareness has grown substantially over the past twenty years. Pride of ownership is evident throughout the district in the well-maintained homes and grounds.

Character-Defining Features

Site

- exhibits a curvilinear pattern of streets and design parkways with a secondary circulation system of alleys;
- possesses historic curving and paving materials of limestone and brick;
- has varied topography, lot sizes, and front-yard berms; and
- is enhanced by mature plantings and street trees.

Brick

- is used in a range of building styles from all eras ranging from Italianate to Craftsman;
- is often in combination with carved limestone and stucco; and
- enhances architectural character through its color, texture, dimensionality, and bonding patterns.

Wood

- articulates stylistic features in cornices, eaves, porch elements, and decorative trim;
- is a relatively common exterior cladding material, especially for Queen Anne and Craftsman houses; and
- has remained relatively free from the application of synthetic siding.

Windows

- are generally double-hung, wooden sash;
- have one-over-one glazing patterns or a decorative upper sash; and
- often possess additional ornament when used in upper-story gable ends or dormers.

Doors

- are usually sheltered by front porches or canopies;
- include both single and double varieties, which use a wide range of glazing patterns to convey a building's architectural character; and
- stand alone or are accompanied by sidelights and transoms.

Roofs

- often establish relationships among houses on a given block in their overall form;
- exhibit a wide range of configurations—some complex and some simple; and
- employ various sheathing materials, color, and types of ornament to add visual distinction.

Alleys

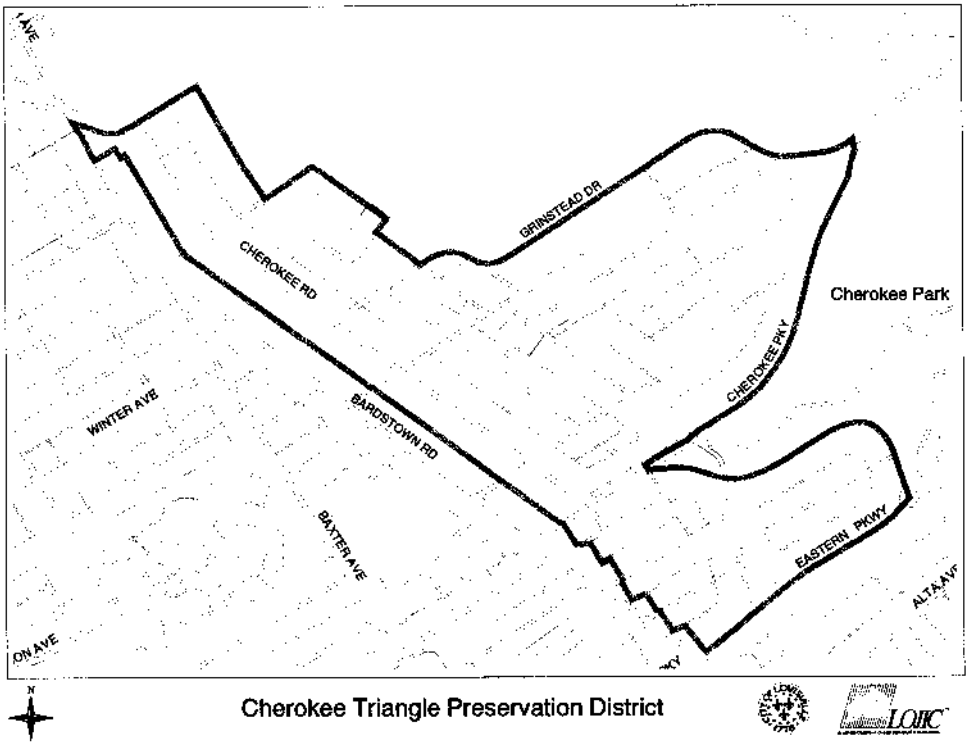
- represent an important and historic feature of the district's transportation network;
- provide a primary means of residential access for those with rear parking; and
- border a wide selection of secondary structures ranging from architectural gems to undistinguished, handyman's-special garages.

SITE

SECONDARY STRUCTURES

ROOF

WINDOW



Topography

Masonry

Siding and Trim

Door

Preservation Principles

A number of guiding preservation principles modeled after the Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation are outlined below. Reading through these principles will help you begin to think about how you can carry out your upcoming project in a way that both enhances your historic building or site and preserves its character-defining features.

Relationships
When evaluating the appropriateness of a given project, the structure, the site, and their relationship to the rest of the district should be given careful consideration.

Use
Historic structures within a local preservation district should be used for their originally intended purpose or for an alternate purpose that requires minimal alteration to the building and site.

Alterations
Repair is always preferred over replacement. When replacement is necessary, materials should replicate or match the visual appearance of the original.

A high level of craftsmanship distinguishes structures within local preservation districts. Distinctive features, finishes, and construction techniques should be preserved whenever possible.

Removal or alteration of historic fabric compromises the original character of a building or site and should be avoided.

Properties, however, do change over time. Those alterations that have become historic in their own right should be maintained as a record of a resource's physical evolution.

New Construction and Additions
Additions should be designed to minimize impact to historic fabric and should be compatible with the main structure in massing, size, and scale.

New, infill construction should be designed so that it is compatible with its neighbors in size, massing, scale, setback, facade organization, and roof form.

New construction and additions should also draw upon established stylistic elements to create a sympathetic design that is clearly of its own era.

False-Historicism
Additions that use new or salvaged material to create a conjectural or falsely historical appearance are inappropriate.

Treatments
Chemical and physical treatments should always be as gentle as possible, since harsh methods like sandblasting can irreversibly damage historic fabric.

Archeology
Historic sites often contain archeological resources, which should be protected and preserved whenever possible. If artifacts are found, contact the Landmarks Commission for an assessment.